

## A HARD ROAD TO ANDY COGGINS.

BY CHESTER BAILEY FERNALD,

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WITH PICTURES BY FREDERIC DORR STEELE.

THE naked statues stared at us along the hall, each one as if to say, "What the divil is two common men doing in this private palace, anyway?" But they did n't faze me, for I knew all about 'em from a newspaper clipping which by chance I had in me pocket; and says I to Clarence O'Shay:

"Do ye know the carpet you 're standing on cost thirty-five dollars a yard?"

"The saints!" says Clarence, stepping off of it.

"Do ye know the mosaic floor you 're standing on now cost thirty-five dollars a foot?" says I.

"The divil himself!" says Clarence, stepping back on the carpet.

"And the man that owns it 'all is worth twenty-eight millions in gold," says I.

Clarence's eyes bulged out like little blue beads on a golliwog.

"Could he come by as much as that honest?" says he.

"Sure," says I. "For the stealing was done by his ancestors; and his mother that rich by continual marriage and divorce that she never carried the same handkerchief twice, but put it away in a drawer."

The suspicious eye of the lackey in the white shirt and swallowtail come back down the marble stairs and shrugged his nose at us.

"No one in this house knows anything about you two," says he, laying hold of the door.

"Did n't the gentleman tell us to come here," says Clarence, "and did n't he give us his pasteboard?"

"Oh, maybe he did," says the lackey, "and then, again, maybe you picked up his card in the street." And with that he opened the door to the night and let in a breath of the fog; and me and Clarence fingered our caps with rage.

"Hold on, William!" commands a voice in patent-leathershoes, running down the stairs,

all pink with haste. "You are the two men which Mr. Wallace said he would hunt up for me; and you 're just in the nick of time."

"Yes, sir," says I. "The gentleman told us you 'd pay us ten dollars and a pleasant evening—"

"And a hot dinner, which we ain't had any," says Clarence.

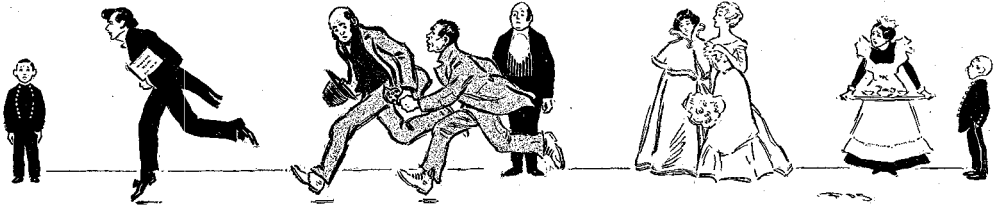
"Yes, sir," says I. "But what the gentleman wanted us to do for you in return he did n't have time to describe, but told us to run—"

"And you 're just in the nick of time," says the absent-minded Poet, which we saw he was from his overgrown hair and the fiddling of his hands. "I do hope you understand we want the real thing," says he, "as far as possible."

"We have no idea what you want us to do," says I, inviting his explanations.

"They are made of wood," says the Poet, musing to himself, while me and Clarence looked questions at each other; "but they will sound all right, I think," says the Poet. "And what I want especial to say—oh, there goes the music! Come on!"

And in the gasp of his own breath he galloped up the polished stairs, with me and Clarence chasing his paper dancing-pumps like four cobblestones—past long corridors, and lady's-maids, and boys in buttons, as many as a dream, every one staring at us like the flight of strange birds, and we all the time guessing as to what he wanted us for and what it was that was made of wood. Till the Poet burst through a door, and we after him; and all of a sudden here was me and Clarence in Newport, behind the scenes of a private theatricals, up to our chins in society. 'T was such a swarm of the wives, daughters, sons, maid-servants, and man-lackeys of millionaires, all running this way and that, and smelling of cut flowers and violet-water, and jingling with jewelry and glittering with clothes, that me and Clarence



"LIKE THE FLIGHT OF STRANGE BIRDS."

was nigh overcome with the altitude of it, and would have liked to crawl off in the dark like two mongrel pups at a dog-show.

The Poet had burrowed himself in the crowd; but here comes William, and says I, smiling kind: "Will you please ask the gentleman what is it that 's made of wood?" And says William: "No, I will not!"

We said to ourselves had he fetched us to play on something of wood, like the castanets or the violin, for which we had none of the gift? And we begun to feel as foolish as two plumbers called in on the run to a case of nose-bleed. And, besides, the Poet would seem to have clean forgot of us, and the stares of the women kept pinning us close to the wall, like two foreign insects. Till Clarence, that had his appetite all spread for the hot dinner that no one would bring us, and could not keep his morals upright without ballast of food, begun to take hard of the passage of time, and says he:

"Come away from this foolish place, and let 's keep on to Andy Coggins' and get a plate of beans."

And, to sweeten your temper, comes William and boosted us off of the stage, and says did we think was the cream of society aching to witness our beauty?

"Oh, yes," says Clarence to me, in a burst. "Get off the stage, and get off the earth—that 's the way it is with them swells. This place may be all right," says he, loud enough for every one; "but I 'm going down to Andy Coggins' to get a plate of beans."

And the women all opened their mouths to each other like dying fish, till me face tanned with shame. But a friend of the Poet says he:

"I 'm glad you 've come; for we could n't have had the play without you. I suppose you 've tried 'em on?"

"Tried on what?" says I. "What is it we 're wanted to do?"

And he put his finger to his mouth and pointed to the curtain; and up it went, with me and Clarence stranded in the wings, and no more intelligent than when we entered the house.

We see a background of good-looking maidens all setting in the woods; and one that I will say was as handsome as ever need be, she was the main consideration of the play. And says she, all speaking in rhymes and fine simile and such high-sounding language as no poor girl could afford, the gist of the following:

"I 'm a most misfortunate young person from down here at Tholwick-in-the-Glen. And though I do look as if I was up too early this morning, me character is beyond approach. For the fact is," says she, breaking into tears, "just now when the sun was not yet gilding rosy on the mountaintops, some one waked up me father—waked him up before he was out of his bed, and killed him with the cruel end of a stick. And me, poor romantic bird, I 'm out looking for me uncle, that was reputed to be hunting the wild boar this morning—or else," says she, throwing both eyes on the floor, "some handsome young knight that would love me for meself alone. But," says she, blubbering again (and Clarence was deep affected), "no one appears to like me style, and the best thing I 'd do is to crawl in some hole and die, like a tired dove!"

But on jumps the Hero, a strapping young foot-ball kicker from Harvard, shining in his armor like a brass tea-pot.

"What—a lovely young thing like you!" says he. "Why, when you walk in the garden the lilies turn green, and a bee stopped for some time at your lips, I hear, thinking your words was honey. Show me him that slew your parent, and I 'll write his name in the skies of evil fame," says he, "for I 'm Sir Hothryn; and to-night, sweet Yvernelle, you and me will be married with the end of the candles that buried the old man."

"Never!" says the Villain, breaking through the door of his castle and landing between 'em. "Young man," says he, "you promised your hand in marriage to me daughter Thuthelred. Leave this stray virgin alone, and go into the house and make love to Thuthelred, ye forgetful beggar, or else meet trouble. For I 'm a bad man, and

suspected of killing not only Yvernelle's father, but yours, too."

"Then, bedad!" says the Hero, "I consider meself justified in keeping me word of honor to the fair Yvernelle. Look," says he, pointing up at another young woman that stepped on the stage and got lost in the flare of the Heroine's beauty, "observe the approach of the villainous Thuthelred. That woman is swearing to keep you and me apart; but, on me soul," says the Hero, "I swear that you, Yvernelle, are a better-looking girl than this Thuthelred."

"What," says the Villain, "her prettier than my Thuthelred? A slap in the face of me honor!"

And with that the orchestra struck up with chords of disharmony, and the Villain cut a round hole with his sword in the air, and jumped through it to get at the Hero, that had come off with nothing but a dirk; and the only thing that saved the Hero's life was the coming down of the curtain.

"And never a hiss!" says Clarence, waving his hand in disgust at the stage. "They can sit and hear of a young girl's father treated like that, and they never give vent to a word of objection—a fine creature like that," says he, "and pretty as ever was made! And that Hero was no good; for why did n't he pick up a cobble and make an end of that man with the sword? I've always heard ill of the aristocracy," says he, all vacant with hunger, "and now I believe it; and in such a place where doings like that is received with applause I will not remain!"

"And you two stopping here all this time!" says the Poet, red with exasperation. "How in the world do you know if they'll fit?"

"What fit? F'it what?" says I.

"Look here, mister," says Clarence; "I don't know what it is that I don't know whether it fits, and I don't know what it is that is made of wood; but whatever it is, I can neither play on it, eat it, nor spend it for beer; and this place is all crazy, and I'm going down to Andy Coggins' to get a plate of beans."

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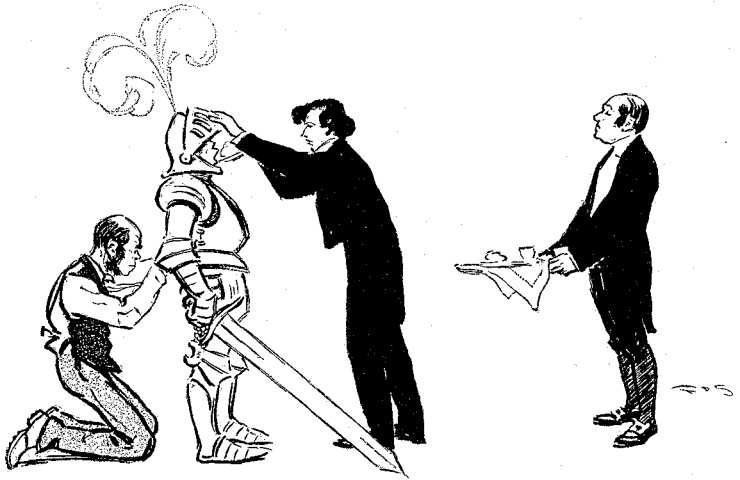
"No, no—hold him!" says the Poet. "What will me play be without the fight? Could n't ye see that from reading the book?" says he, answering several questions from millionaires in the same breath.

"What book? What fight?" says we.

"Oh, 't is most extraordinary if ye have n't understood," says he, with impatience, brushing every one else aside and dragging us into a room. "Here 's the two suits of armor," says he, "and why don't you get into 'em? And here 's your wooden swords. And there 's half a bowl of punch. And what I want you to do is precisely this. Just a minute," says he; and a lady's-maid hauled him away.

Clarence got that amused by the punch that he let me fit him into his sheet-iron vest, with the arms and legs of a lobster.

"'T is the liquor of the aristocracy," says he, with his head in the bowl; "and I'm wondering how long before I'll arrive at some opinion of it." And he grew that tame I could put the sheet-iron head on him, with the face that opened and shut; and then, when



"THE POET OPENS CLARENCE'S HELMET AND PASSES IT IN TO HIM."

he had absorbed the dregs of the punch, he gave the ghost of a smile. But when I stood him up complete and creaking in the rivets, he begun to complain of the ancients for fighting in such foolish clothes, and I knew he was running down again, and had arrived at no opinion of his liquor at all.

"Them spider-legs of yours is the most awkward I ever see," says he, watching me try with the armor, and him all at outs with creation.

"Them ancients was all dwarfs," says I,

sharing his humor; "and this tin trousers is a total misfit."

"That's right," says he; "say I'm a dwarf. And you get me all jailed inside of this crazy invention, and then you call it all off! The whole place is misfits," says he, jumping up,



"CHAINED . . . TO THE SAME TREE."

all maudlin with famine. "The liquor is weak as pap. And that Angora Poet ignores me, and that William de Stiffneck insults me. And never a taste of food, though ye hint as loud as a parrot in its cage. And I'm going to take this tin foolishness off me back," says he, fiddling violent with the armor, "and I'm going down to Andy Coggins' to get—what's the matter of it?" says he, wrestling with his iron gloves and trying to find his hands and feel for the buckles of his breastplate. "How do I get out of this?" says he, raising his voice beyond all decency. "Do I back up ag'in' the wall and break the shell of it like a flea? Le' me out of here!" says he, growing frantic. He dashed himself ag'in' the wall, and caromed off, jingling like a tinsmith. "Unscrew me head off of this!" he commands, pulling at his helmet. "Ye'll not, then, will ye?" says he. And with that he took up a chair and hit himself that hard in the helmet that it knocked him down on the floor.

"What's the matter here?" says the Poet, breaking through the door.

"It's beans—beans!" shouts Clarence, gesticulating with his legs like a beetle on

its back. "I'm on me way to Andy Coggins' to get a plate of beans!"

"Maybe the smell of food would revive him," says I, withholding me sarcasm.

"Here!" says the Poet, snatching a strange pastry from William's tray. 'T was a bit of cream paste hit up with a stick till it looked like the froth on a beer, and rolled inside of a cooky the thick of a post-card; and the Poet opens Clarence's helmet and passes it in to him.

"What's this?" says Clarence.

"'T is food," says the Poet.

"Food?" says Clarence, with a gulp. "Ye call that food! I open me mouth for a hot repast, and, bedad! ye give me a half-gust of wind beat up with an egg! Take this Poet away," says Clarence; "take him away, or I'll do meself harm with me feelings."

Then me and the Poet took consultation, and I come back to Clarence.

"There's supper waiting at the end of the play," says I. "And the man ye're to duel with will be that William the lackey, that says he was once in the cavalry; for I'm too big for the armor, and William is just your size. And the Poet says that the cause of the fight will be your trying to save this beautiful Yvernelle from the hands of that Villain and William."

"For her?" says Clarence, jumping up. "And ag'in' that William? Why did n't ye say that before? Come right along and give me the cue. Look at that, now," he whispers, pointing to the Villain, that was dragging the fine young lady by a chain to a tree. "People turn out for to see a poor girl maltreated like that! Yes, yes, I know 't is only a play; but where's the fun of it, and her face as sweet as the Countess of Cork? What does this William say to that?" says Clarence, all loose in the tongue with excitement; "and what do I say to him back?"

"Whist!" says I. "The Poet has give me the book of the play, and I'm finding your place."

"O cruel foe," says the poor girl, praying to the Villain, "here's me father slain at sunrise, me mother poisoned while saying the morning prayers, and now you stole me safeguard, me magic ruby, while I was washing me face at yonder purling brook. Heaven will get even with you for this!" says she.

"Me innocent dove," says the Villain, "let's turn over a new leaf and forget that 't was me that slew your father and mother!"

And here in the wings, with his wooden sword, stood the proud lackey William, iron-sheathed from the middle to his ends, and

ready to back the Villain for any blackguard trick that might be, with Clarence's hair bristling at the sight of him.

"'T is a tragedy," I whispers to Clarence. "You are the noble friend of Sir Hothryn the Hero; and the Poet says, above all things, fight strong, and not weak."

"Yes, yes," says Clarence, "strong, and not weak. And a fine-looking head she has, and elegant feet," says he, expanding with pleasure. "And poor William! What will I do with his comic remains when I have him out of his shell?"

"Whist! I've not arrived at the killing," says I, blowing at the pages.

"Poor William!" says Clarence, with a chuckle. A heavenly smile was bathing him head to foot; and he dropped the vizard of his helmet to hide his expectations. "Bedad! I will make you an entertainment of that William!" says he, tickling himself with the words. "Bedad! I will make a climax of him!"

"Clarence!" says I, all jutting with perspiration.

"What, dear?" says he.

The words stuck in me throat. How could I break to him what I had read?

"Clarence dear," says I, "it says in this book of instructions that the end of the fight—the end of the fight—" and here I broke down.

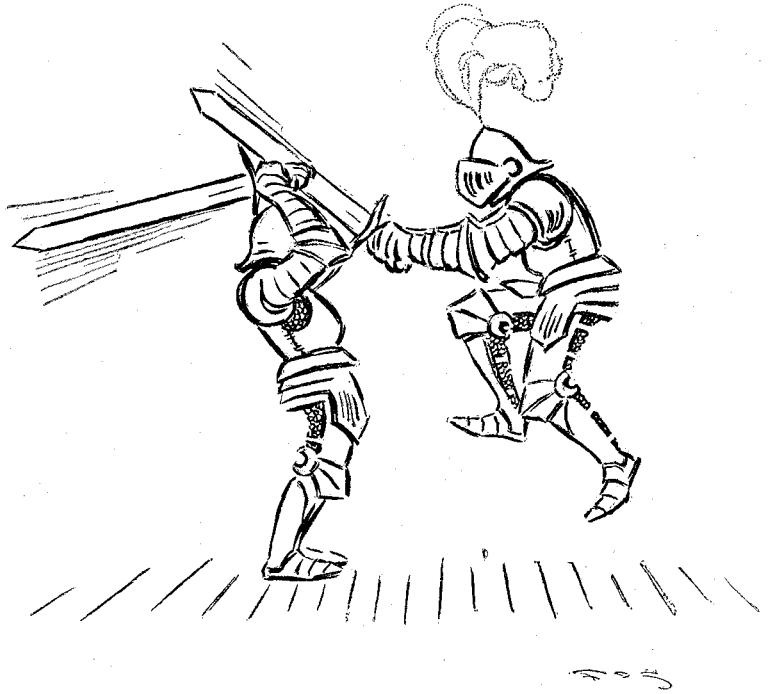
"Yes, yes," says Clarence, all beaming with light through the holes in his armored face. "Do I dig a hole with me sword and bury him?"

"According to the book," says I, swallowing me heart, "the end of the fight is a tragedy. And Sir Hothryn does n't rescue the young lady at all, but gets killed. And the killing is done by William; and just before that—why, William is required to kill Sir Gathred; and Sir Gathred—that 's you!"

'T was as though I had stepped on me pet canary in the middle of its song. From that moment from his helmet, that had grown as

light-hearted as a baby, exuded never a sigh nor a sign. "Did n't ye understand?" says I, tapping his iron shoulder. But his whole suit of armor hung like an empty one in the Tower of London. I opened his face and looked inside of him. There he was; but his mouth was as tight as a clam, and I could n't catch his eye. I made a circle of him: but when I looked here, his eye traveled there; and when I looked there, his eye traveled here. And I bit me lips like the taste of a funeral psalm, and mopped great drops of fear and doubt from me brow with the back of me hand.

For Yvernelle, besides, was pulling us all by the nerves. Ye'd thought 't was true she was stolen away from her lover, and had no hope and no friends; and such was the melancholy of her voice and the clank of her chains that ten little misses in the front row



"FUMING AND CLASHING LIKE WILD IRON HORNETS."

all blew their nose and would not look sideways.

"Clarence dear," says I, walking on eggs, "'t is a bit misfortunate, sure; but you would n't think of refusing to die, since 't is meant so in the Poet's book, of course?"

He snapped down his vizard and closed himself in in the dark; and all me answer was a blood-curdling moan from Miss Yver-

nelle; for the Villain had just tried to pat her hand, and the end was approaching.

"Clarence dear, could n't ye speak?" says I. His eyes was set across the stage like diamonds, glittering on the opposite William.

At that moment the Hero shinned over the castle wall and stepped on the Villain's toe and called him a hideous mask. The two rushed off fighting in the wings, with the orchestra doing shivers on the minor strings, and Yvernelle stitching back and forth, all stewing with tenter-hooks, till back comes the Villain with a groan.

"Hothryn has cut off both me thumbs!" wails the Villain, falling down. "Arrest him for carrying a magic sword!" And on struggles the Hero, and gets chained by three farmers to the same tree with Yvernelle.

"'T is the end, at last," says she, breaking down.

"Clarence," says I, "'t is your turn soon. You *will* have reason—and let William kill you comfortable?"

But he stood as silent as his picture.

"Farewell, Hothryn," says the Villain. "You was a brave young knight; but you got tangled in another man's rope, and I'll have you executed at once, on charge of heresy. Summon Sir Tancred!"

And on drops William, like a bantam from the hand. Clarence gave motions of life. I listened outside of him, and me thermometer fell within me; for I heard him getting up steam.

"Farewell, me love, then," says Yvernelle, between her tears. "I'll make a funeral of meself as soon as you are dead."

"Hold!" says Hothryn. "I've just heard the horn of me faithful friend Sir Gathred. Art thou a man, Sir Tancred? Wilt fight Sir Gathred?"

"I will!" says William, as stern as turning away peddlers from the door. He began stamping his foot and cutting out fancy silhouettes with his sword. I laid me hand on Clarence like a boiler planning to burst.

"O'Shay darling—for good manners' sake!" says I.

"Hasten, Sir Gathred!" commands Hothryn, tipping us the wink. "On you hangs all my sun and stars!"

Then I shut me eyes like jumping off a cliff in a dream; and Clarence give a leap and exploded in the middle of the stage.

When I looked up I knew that the worst had begun. The audience had risen in their seats. The Hero and Yvernelle stood frozen together with astonished hands, the Poet

gesticulating with a face like quinine, and the servants all pallid with fear. And in the center of it whirled William as Tancred and Clarence as Gathred, fuming and clashing like wild iron hornets, with the orchestra crashing and blaring like mad. They squared off one second for breath; then they collided together like two evil angels; and William fell down with the magnitude of a chandelier, and arose again, and fled, bedad! like a hairless dog, leaving pieces of himself behind him, and calling out to be saved, with Clarence pursuing him like the wild Juggernaut, till they both got drowned in the cellar, by the roar of the audience and the shrieks of the servant-maids.

The Hero and Yvernelle looked at each other all mouthless. How was he going to die, with no one to kill him? Or she to poison herself without reason?

"Go on with the words—*do* something—die—die!" shouts the Poet, in a whisper from the wings.

But the words would have sounded too foolish, with Clarence and William still passing away like a thunder-storm in the cellar. The eye of the beholders went sudden to the Villain, that had laid still with his wounds, and had watched the fight with his back to the footlights. He was writhing and red in the face beyond control, that irreverent he was, and laughing at the cruel mess that O'Shay had made of the play.

"For Heaven's sake! can't somebody do something?" calls the Poet, his voice half tears, and the audience wondering what was the hitch.

"All right," says the Villain, shaking like jelly. He rolled over to the audience. "Alas!" says he, with a frightful face, holding up his two decapitated thumbs, "me wounds have proved fatal! Hothryn and Yvernelle, join hands for the dance of life!" he shouts. "For 't is evident," he says, with a grin that near split his face in twain, "that the Fates never intended ye should perish. I'm dying," says he, with a horrible smile, "and well I'm paid for this day's work. Now, ye wooden image," says he, rolling over to the man at the rope, "come down with your curtain!"

And down it went, to a tumult stupendous. Clarence come up from the cellar alone.

"You ignorant fool!" squeaks the Poet, with rage. "You, with your beastly knock-about—you, with your low-lived horse-play—"

But in burst the door and a mob of millionaires.

“Hurrah!” says they. “Girls all sobbing in every direction, and that surprise—that blood-stirring combat at the end—when ye had us all worked up believing ’t would turn out a tragedy! Masterly!” says they. “The finest thing in the language! And let’s have something to eat.”

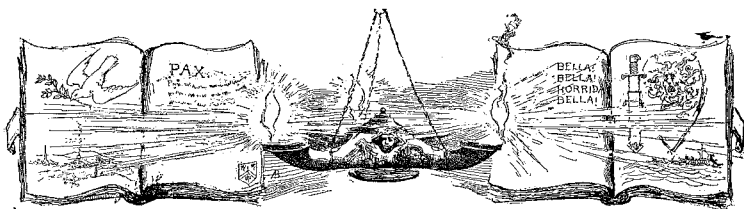
I found a short cut across the lawn to that door where William had insulted us. There, in the mist and electric light, was

Clarence, coming down the steps in all his armor, shining like *Hamlet’s* father.

“Where the devil ye going?” says I.

“Have no conversation with me,” says he, waving his wooden sword, “and keep company with yourself. I’m on me way to Andy Coggins’ to get a plate of beans.”

Then he swallowed himself in the fog; and I heard the howl of a dog that ran off with its tail at half-mast.



## THE MAN OF DESTINY.<sup>1</sup>

BY CLINTON DANGERFIELD.

FOR this, the burning winds and biting rain  
Were powerless against him, and the spite  
Of the coiled snake, ay watchful on the plain,  
Was foiled; for this, the young West's wholesome might

Entered his veins; for this, the stifling ring  
Of evil in the civic life was snapped.  
Harmless the wiles of each envenomed thing,  
Freely he passed where other men were trapped.

O maker of To-morrow, by those pains  
Endured to reach the round world's noblest seat,  
By the ideals that led you on, and trained  
Your will to dominance, by all the sweet

Returns of love which on just rulers wait,  
Give us such new and kindly days that none  
Shall linger at the ruined bars of hate,  
And misconception's work shall be undone.

Aye, give us Yesterday; but on it raise  
A greater nation than the old day knew;  
Thus men who dreamed of this shall stand at gaze  
In wondering awe to find that high dream true.

<sup>1</sup> See "The New President: A Prayer," THE CENTURY for November, 1901.

